

Jesus: Born to Serve

Ron R. Ritchie

This has been a wonderful holiday season for many within this family as well as those living in the surrounding communities. As a spiritual family we have received many blessings. We have been fed spiritually and physically by many teachers and helpers in a variety of classes from the children's programs to the adult seminars. We have been blessed by the many men, women and children among us who have encouraged our hearts with their children's programs, the musical concerts, the senior citizen outreach, and our Christmas Eve service to mention but a few of the blessings. But none of these blessings could have been ours without the many godly servants who minister to us behind the scenes. The half cannot be told until Eternity but I was so encouraged for example when a few weeks ago I walked out into this cold room in the middle of the week and found Charlie and Carole George stocking the cards and pencils in the back of the pews and they are but one couple among a team of folks who come every week to do the same thing. During the week you will find Voy-tek, Toan Le and Eric among the many seeking to keep our facilities in proper working order. Then we are all blessed because of the servant hearts of Tracy Bunce, Barbara Stepherson, and Jennifer Flippen, in the main office; Kathy Sill and Carol Francis watching over our finances; and Gloria McGriff and Phyllis Fletcher serving us in Discovery Publishing and Books. We don't have time to mention the names of all the faithful servants on the Worship Team, as well as the Ushers and Deacons, but only to say how blessed we all are by all of them because of their willingness to follow in the steps of their Lord Jesus who said "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve ..." Mark 10:45

Transition: It is to this wonderful Servant of Jehovah that we want to look at today in order to be reminded not only of His servant heart and ministry but as an example for all of us who love Him to follow in His footsteps. Isaiah prophesied some 700 years before the birth of The Servant of Jehovah about His Person and ministry.

1. The Servant of God to Come: Isaiah 61:1-2

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, Because the Lord has anointed me-
To bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to captives, And freedom to prisoners;
To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord, And the day of vengeance of our God;

Context: Isaiah, the servant of God was called as a prophet of God to Israel and Judah over a period of 60 years. (740-681 BC) In the Isaiah scroll Chapters 1-39 the prophet called the nation to repentance and to renew their relationship with their one and only living and loving God. By 721 BC Israel was taken into the Assyrian Captivity leaving the two tribes of Judah to stand alone against all their enemies. Isaiah living and ministering in Jerusalem then wrote Chapters 40-66 filling the hearts of God's people with a message of forgiveness, comfort and hope which would all be accomplished by the coming of the suffering and then sovereign Messiah. Isaiah described the future glory of Jerusalem in Chapter 60 and then in Chapter 61 he described the Person and Ministry of the coming Messiah as well as the blessings He will bring upon the faithful remnant.

Transition: With Assyria in the north looking for an opportunity to overrun the Holy City and the rumors that the Babylonian Empire was growing stronger each day, Isaiah's message was of great comfort to the spiritual remnant.

1. The Person of the Messiah

"The Spirit of the Lord God (Adonia Jehovah) is upon me,
Because the Lord has anointed me- (I am Jehovah' s Anointed.)

The pre-incarnated Christ spoke through His prophet Isaiah and described Himself to the nation. As we look back now we can see that the prophecies cover our Lord's ministry in His first coming and many will be totally fulfilled in His Second coming. The Messiah to come was God's anointed, the one who would bruise the head of Satan (Gen.3:16) the one who was to be born of a virgin and was to be called Immanuel (Isa. 7:14) , the Sovereign Lord, the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity, and Prince of Peace, (Isa. 9:6), the one who would rule on David's Throne forever (11 Sam. 7) This wonderful Messiah would come in the power of the Holy Spirit to minister among His people and the Gentiles . He would be the mediator of the New Covenant, the light to the Gentiles, the gift of salvation to the whole world but only after he suffers the shame and pain of the cross, death, burial and then the glorious resurrection from the dead.

2. The Ministry of the Messiah

As the people listened to the words of Isaiah their hearts would have been filled with the hope that Messiah was coming soon to deal with their immediate circumstances in the same way many of us are looking forward to our Lord's second coming to deal with our immediate circumstances.

a. To bring good news to the afflicted; those who are penitent poor, those who were lowly, poor in spirit, spiritually bankrupt. Those who declare themselves spiritually bankrupt and then place their faith in Messiah will receive the good news that they would have access to the King and all His spiritual resources to face their current realities. (Isa.66:2)

b. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, In the immediate context this hope could apply emotionally to those Jews who had immediate family members taken into the Assyrian Captivity, as well as all those in Judah who have suffered personal tragic that breaks ones heart. In time it would be applied to those taken out of Judea into the Babylonian captivity. On a spiritual level it would these words could bring comfort to all those who have sinned against Messiah and upon confession were forgiven. Earlier King David cried out to God over the sin of adultery "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. (Ps. 51)

c. To proclaim liberty to captives, Again the Jews in Judea upon hearing these words would still have their relatives and friends in the Northern Tribes in mind who had been taken into captivity by Assyria some 20 years earlier. (721 BC) At the same time Messiah would be addressing all the Assyrian captives as well as those in Judea who had been taken spiritually captive by the Satanic alluring god and goddess of the surrounding nations.

d. And freedom to prisoners: The Servant of the Lord had already said in Isaiah 42:7 "I will keep you and I will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness. But first they must be set free themselves from all the spiritual blindness that holds them captive.

e. To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord, the year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:8-16) the year of liberty which came every 50 years. The benefits of the year of Jubilee were (1) rest for the soil, and rest from harvest . (2) The return to the original owner of all property that had to be sold because of debts or poverty. (3) All men and their families who were hired out to another family because of poverty or debt were to be set free. Thus the year of Jubilee became one of freedom and grace for all suffering, bringing not only redemption to the captive and deliverance from want to the poor, but also release to the whole congregation of the Lord from the sore labor of the earth...." for in this year every kind of oppression was to cease and every member of the covenant people find his Redeemer in the Lord, who brought him back to his possession and family. (Unger's Dictionary, p. 352) This was the season of favor from the Lord, the day of salvation, and the time of God's grace

f. And the day of vengeance of our God; Now is the day of Salvation but a day is coming when Messiah will set up His righteous rule in Jerusalem and in that day He will made all wrongs right and deal with all the injustice and unrighteousness of men. And He will deal with all His enemies. In this immediate case the Jews

would have been thinking of Assyria But the day of vengeance is the day of God's wrath against rebellious mankind as well as Satan as recorded in Revelation 19-20

Illustration: In thinking about how our Lord Jesus modeled "bringing good news to the afflicted" I couldn't help but think about one of His faithful servants in this generation named Happy Beatty. Few of us know of the wonderful ministry this godly woman and her team have been doing among the senior citizens of this community for the last two decades. They are committed To bring good news to the afflicted. Each quarter Happy and her team put on an evangelistic outreach luncheon for those seniors who are spending their last years on this earth in the VA hospitals or rest homes. They go out into the community and pick up some 100-150 senior and bring them here to the fellowship hall, place them around tables each with a host and hostess, have some great singing, wonderful food and a gospel message informing them of God's love for them in Jesus Christ. This team of godly men and women are filled with the Holy Spirit and the Love of Christ and with servants hearts seek to fulfill their calling to those who are afflicted.

Transition 700 years after the prophecy of Isaiah 60: 1-2 we open up the gospel of Luke 4:16-22 and read about the...

11. The Servant of God who has Come: Luke 4: 16-22

And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. And the Book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him and he opened the book and found the place where it was written,

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor,

He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives,

And recovery of sight to the blind, To set free those who are downtrodden,

To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord."

"And He began to say to them "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled ..."

1. And He came to Nazareth, where He was brought up, and as was His custom He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath.... Leaving Cana then he was lead to his home town Nazareth, in his second year of ministry. At this time He was becoming very popular, "news about Him spread" because of the (1) Ministry of Healing in Cana, (2) and The Message of Hope. : The Kingdom is at Hand . At that time He "...was "Praised by all" that is before the Pharisees started moving in. Then on the Sabbath as was His custom He entered the synagogue.

2. And the book (scroll) of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. The Temple in Jerusalem was designed for Worship and Sacrifice. But the local synagogue was like our local church designed to meet the spiritual needs of the people within a local community on a weekly bases . Possible order of a local service: (1) Thanksgiving to God, the reading of the Shema, Hear O Israel, the Lord God is one. (2) Prayer and the response of "Amen by the Congregation (3) Reading from the Law (Pentateuch) Hebrew then translated into Aramaic. (4) Reading from the Prophets (Hebrew and Aramaic) At this point the Head of the Synagogue would invited one of the elders or a guest to read from one of the prophets, and knowing Jesus was in the audience He invited Him to read from the Scroll Isaiah Jesus took the Scroll and kept unrolling it until He came to Isaiah 61: 1-2 and read: The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind,to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord..."

a.The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me...It is the Holy Spirit who will provide the power necessary for the Spiritual King of Israel to invade the Kingdom of darkness and rescue the victims of the devil who are slaves

of sin. The Saints in the Old Testament were given the gift of the person and power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish certain task on behalf of God. John the Baptist and Jesus were filled with the Holy Spirit to minister on behalf of Jehovah. At the end of His ministry Jesus told His disciples in the upper room " And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of Truth...He abides with you, and will be in you. (John 14: 16-17)

b. Because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He was the "Anointed Servant of the Lord" His was a preacher of good news to the poor, those who were physically, emotionally, and spiritually bankrupt. Blessed are those who are spiritually bankrupt for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. (Matt. 5:3) As they cast their lives on Messiah they were given access to the King and all His resources. He also preached to the financially rich warning them that their riches would destroy them "But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full. Woe to you who are well-fed now, for you shall be hungry. (Luke 6: 24-25) ('He has sent me " to heal the brokenhearted..." is not quoted by Jesus according in Luke, and it maybe because Jesus saw the poor and brokenhearted as one.)

c. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives : The Messiah had the power to set free the war captives taken by Satan in the battle for the hearts and souls of men and women in every generation since the fall of man in Adam. Jesus had the power to release the prisoners of Satan, and set them free from their sin , shame and guilt. Our Lord's ministry of proclaiming release to the captives would later be seen when He met 'Legion' a demon possessed man who walked around nude, lived in the tombs, and was so strong no man nor chain could hold him. Jesus cast the demons into a herd of pigs who in turn were driven into the lake and drowned. Meanwhile the town folks came out to see what was happening with Legion and discovered the man "sitting down at the feet of Jesus , clothed and in his right mind, and they became frightened. And those who had seen it reported to them how the man who was demon-possessed had been made well . (Luke 8: 26-39)

d.. recovery of sight to the blind... Who would ever forget the story of Jesus and the blind man as recorded by John . The disciples had pointed out the blind man to Jesus and wanted to know if he was blind because of his own sin or the sin of the parent. Jesus said neither but he was blind since his birth "...in order that the works of God might be displayed in him. We must work the works of Him who sent Me...While I am in the world , I am the light of the world." Jesus then healed the blind man who later became a believer, but the Pharisees accused Jesus of being a sinner because He healed on the Sabbath. Jesus later said "For Judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind." (John 9) Jesus certainly healed the physically blind (John 9) as a symbol of what He wanted to do for the spiritually blind. (See Acts 26: 18)

e. To set free those who are downtrodden: (This phrase is not in Isa.60:2, nor in the LXX : Greek version of Hebrew Text , but may be a commentary on "recovery sight to the blind") Our Lord was referring to the deliverance of all those who had been crushed or oppressed and left without the ability to help themselves any longer. The Romans as well as the leaders of the Jewish religious community could crush people with their political and religious laws and customs. Jesus promised that He would come and become the one who would lift up all those who could no longer lift themselves up especially in the realm of Satanic influence. "Come to Me all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My load is light.:" (Matt. 11:28-30)

f. To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord: For 700 years the faithful remnant was looking forward to Messiah's coming and to hear Him "proclaim the favorable year of the Lord" At that moment in the synagogue Jesus was saying to the Jews in the words of Isaiah, "all that the year of Jubilee stands for, the symbol of the beginning of the Messianic Age, the freedom from the fear of sin, death, Satan, has at this moment arrived in your presence. God is granting Salvation to all his people as well as the Gentile Nations. It was the beginning of the "day of salvation" to all those who placed their faith in Jesus as their long-promised Messiah. The Apostle Paul would later describe this 'favorable year of the Lord' as "He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." (Col. 1:13-14) All the spiritual and physical blessings above are still being offered to humanity. It is still the "favorable year of the Lord".

3. This reading would normally be followed by 5. a word of exhortation and then 6. a Benediction pronounced by a priest in which all would say "Amen" ending the service. But this day would be a little different.

a . Day of Salvation is Present: The Lord stopped in the middle of the sentence: verse 61:2 reads "To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord...(Stopped) He never read the last phrase "And the Day of vengeance of our God". Why? Because this was the Day of Salvation, the opportunity for spiritual healing was available for all in that synagogue that day as well as for all within the nation of Israel who would place their faith in Him as their long awaited Messiah The day of vengeance would come one day upon all who would reject Jesus as Messiah .

b. Messiah is Present Today! And He rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon Him and He began to say to them. "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." Within these gracious words, Jesus was informing His hometown family and friends that He was the long awaited Messiah of Israel. That He was at that moment the total fulfillment of the Isaiah passage first proclaimed some 700 years earlier. Here standing before them was the long hoped for Immanuel : The God Anointed, Spirit Filled Messiah . All they had to do was fall on their knees and worship Him and then ask Him how they could serve Him. It was the Day of Salvation not the "Day of Vengeance".

c. Messiah was Rejected: That crowd in the Nazareth synagogue rejected Him and then tried to kill Him. He avoided that threat to his life but in time the Father placed Him on the Cross for the sin of humanity and then raised Him from the dead. He now stands as the model servant for the spiritual remnant in every generation until He come again in power and glory as the Lord of the Universe. Paul spoke of Him as our model when he wrote to the Philippians "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself taking a form of a bondservant..." (2:5-7) Jesus said to His disciples and to all who are willing to be His disciples: Then He said to His disciples "If any one serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall My servant also be; if any one serves Me, the Father will honor him. (John 12:26.)

Illustration: What a joy to be allow to be among the many servants of Jesus Christ here who are ministering in His Name among the handicap children at Green Pastures, and the homeless at City Team. What a delight to hear of so many of you working with the Gideons and the Crises Pregnancy Center, as well as the East Palo Alto ministry to mention but only a few of the wonderful open door of love has placed among us to walk through and serve Him until He comes again.

Conclusion: An old English Carol has the following words

How shall I fitly meet Thee, and give Thee welcome due?
The nations long to greet Thee, and I would great Thee too.
O Fount of light, shine brightly upon my darken'd heart,
That I may serve Thee rightly, and know Thee as Thous art.

My prayers for you as well as myself in this new year is that when He comes again He will find all of us serving Him in a variety of ministries motivated by a heart of love towards Him who came to this earth to serve us and pay a ransom for all of us. (Mark 10:45)

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Ron R. Ritchie
Sixth Message
Isa 61:1-2 Luke 4: 16-21

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